

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATION AND FARMERS WELFARE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 272
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 5TH FEBRUARY, 2019

FARMERS DEBTS

272. SHRI C. MAHENDRAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्री be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India's farmers are buckling under the weight of their debts and rural suicides are spiking dangerously;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has noted that rural households are desperate for relief;
- (d) if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (SHRI PARSHOTTAM RUPALA)

(a) & (b): The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) under the Ministry of Home Affairs compiles and disseminates information on suicides, in its publication titled 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India' (ADSI). These Reports on suicides are available upto 2015 on its website. As per the ADSI Reports during the year 2014 a total of 12,360 persons involved in farming sector (consisting of 5,650 farmers/cultivators and 6,710 agricultural labourers) and 2015 a total of 12,602 persons involved in farming sector (consisting of 8,007 farmers/cultivators and 4,595 agricultural labourers) committed suicides. The Reports for the year 2016 onwards have not been published yet.

As per ADSI Report of 2015 'Bankruptcy or Indebtedness' and 'Farming Related Issues' are reported as major causes of suicides among farmers/ cultivators. Other prominent causes of farmers/ cultivators suicides are family problems, illness, etc.

(c) to (e): Agriculture being a State subject, the State Governments undertakes development of perspective plans and ensures effective implementation of the programmes/ schemes. Also, Government of India supplements the efforts of the State Governments through various Schemes/ Programmes. The Government has been reorienting the agriculture sector by focusing on an income-centeredness which goes beyond achieving merely the targeted production. The income approach focuses on achieving high productivity, reduced cost of cultivation and remunerative price on the produce, with a view to earn higher profits from farming.

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With a view to ensuring availability of agriculture credit at a reduced interest rate to farmers, the Government is implementing the Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS) since 2006-07. Under ISS, the Government is providing interest subvention to make available short-term crop loans upto Rs.3 lakh for a period of one year at an effective interest rate of 4% per annum against the normal lending rate of 9% to prompt payee farmers. Thus, the prompt payee farmers are getting an interest subvention of 5% per annum. Government sets annual target for the flow of credit to the agriculture sector. Banks have been consistently surpassing the annual target.

In order to ensure that all eligible farmers are provided with hassle-free and timely credit for their agricultural operations, the Government has introduced the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme, which enables them to draw cash to purchase agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides as well as meet other agricultural and consumption needs. The KCC Scheme has since been simplified by providing the farmers with ATM enabled debit card based on one-time documentation and built-in cost escalation in the limit, etc.

To bring small, marginal, tenant farmers, oral lessees, etc. into the fold of institutional credit, Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) have been promoted by banks. The Government also promotes formation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in a big way to enable farmers to leverage economies of scale, not only for agricultural inputs but also for enhanced marketing opportunities.

Further, the Government has set a target of doubling of farmers' income by the year 2022. The Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee to examine issues relating to doubling of farmers' income and recommend a strategy to achieve doubling of farmers' income in real terms by the year 2022. The Committee has submitted its report to the Government.

The committee has identified seven sources of income growth viz, improvement in crop productivity; improvement in livestock productivity; resource use efficiency or savings in the cost of production; increase in the cropping intensity; diversification towards high value crops; improvement in real prices received by farmers; and shift from farm to non-farm occupations. The committee is also looking into the investments in and for agriculture e.g. increasing public investments for agriculture-rural roads, rural electricity, irrigation; the need for policy support to enable investments by corporate sector in agriculture.

Several initiatives have already been taken among each of the above mention strategies which inter-alia include:

- (i) Initiating market reforms through the State Governments.
- (ii) Encouraging contract farming through the State Governments by promulgating of Model Contract Farming Act.
- (iii) Up gradation of Gramin Haats to work as centers of aggregation and for direct purchase of agricultural commodities from the farmers.
- (iv) Launch of eNAM initiative to provide farmers an electronic online trading platform.
- (v) Implementation of flagship scheme of distribution of Soil Health Cards to farmers so that the use of fertilizers can be optimized.

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- (vi) “Per drop more crop” initiative under which drip/sprinkler irrigation is being encouraged for optimal utilization of water.
- (vii) “Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)” under which organic farming is being promoted.
- (viii) With a view to provide better insurance coverage to crops for risk mitigation, Government has launched a crop insurance scheme namely Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) from Kharif 2016 season. This scheme provides insurance cover for all stages of the crop cycle including post-harvest risks in specified instances.
- (ix) Under “Har Medh Par Ped”, agro forestry is being promoted. With the amendment of Indian Forest Act, 1947 Bamboo grown outside forest area has been removed from the definition of trees and a mission have been launched to promote bamboo plantation.
- (x) Giving a major boost for the farmers income, the Government has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSPs) for all Kharif & Rabi crops for 2018-19 season at a level of at least 150 percent of the cost of production.
- (xi) Giving a major boost to the pro-farmer initiatives, the Government has approved a new Umbrella Scheme Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA). The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018. This is an unprecedented step taken by Govt. of India to protect the farmers’ income which is expected to go a long way towards the welfare of farmers.
- (xii) Bee keeping has been promoted under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) to increase the productivity of crops through pollination and increase the honey production as an additional source of income of farmers.
- (xiii) Rashtriya Gokul Mission to enhance milk production and productivity of bovines and to make milk production more remunerative to the farmers.
- (xiv) National Livestock Mission to increase productivity and genetic improvement of livestock.
- (xv) Foreseeing high potential in fisheries sector, a Blue Revolution with multi dimensional activities mainly focusing on fisheries production, both inland and marine is being implemented.

The Government with a view to augment the income of Small and Marginal Farmers, in the Union Budget 2019 has announced “Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMman Nidhi (PM-KiSaN)” a new Central Sector Scheme will be 100% funded by the Government of India.

Under the Scheme, financial benefit of Rs. 6000/- per year will be provided to all Small and Marginal Farmer families having cultivable land holding upto 2 hectare. This financial benefit will be provided in 3 equal instalments of Rs. 2000/- each in a period of every four months in a financial year. The benefit shall be admissible under the scheme w.e.f. 01.12.2018. The existing land-ownership system in the States/ Union Territories will be used for identification of beneficiaries.

All these steps are implemented to reduce agrarian distress and increase the farmers’ income.
